

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14249, of the United Church, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46, to permit the George Washington University to use the subject premises under its campus plan as a radio and television education facility for the University in an R-5-C District at premises 812-814 20th Street, N.W., (Square 101, Lots 837 and 838).

HEARING DATE: February 20, 1985
DECISION DATE: March 6, 1985

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is located on the west side of 20th Street between I and H Streets and is known as premises 812-814 20th Street, N.W. It is in an R-5-C District.
2. The site is located at the edge of the George Washington University Campus, immediately south of the 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue project, a mixed office and retail structure that incorporated the historic Red Lion Row. To the west is a University surface parking lot and two parcels of private property that front on H Street. To the south across H Street is the University Law Center. To the east is University property on which is located the Thomas Edison Building occupied under a lease by PEPCO.
3. The site is irregularly shaped with a frontage of ninety feet on 20th Street. The site is improved with a three story church, lot 837, and a three story parsonage, lot 838. The church building is unoccupied. The parsonage site is leased to a religious organization affiliated with the University. If the application is approved, the parsonage will be vacated to be occupied by the University.
4. The University proposes to use the subject site as a radio and television educational facility under its campus plan. The University will have a long term lease for the use of the premises.
5. Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations provides that a college or university which is an academic institution of higher learning is permitted as a special exception in a residential district, provided, in pertinent part, that:

- A. Such use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable condition;
- B. The applicant shall submit to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including, but not limited to buildings, parking and loading facilities, screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities and a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development; and
- C. Before taking final action on an application for such use, the Board shall have submitted the application to the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District of Columbia Department of Public Works for review and report.

6. The purpose of the subject project is to provide facilities necessary to correct existing deficiencies. Currently, the radio and television program is located in Lisner Auditorium. Those spaces are overcrowded, poorly located and inaccessible to handicapped students and faculty. The University investigated the possibility of correcting the deficiencies within the auditorium itself. This has proven not to be feasible. There is an overall shortage of space in the auditorium, not only in the current radio and television area, but also in the theatrical support space, such as dressing rooms and the limited space set aside for artwork displays. Additionally, the University investigated a number of potential elevator installations in the auditorium to relieve the handicapped of the accessibility problem, but none of those were economically or functionally feasible.

7. The subject premises will undergo extensive interior renovation to house administrative offices, studios and support space for the radio and television programs. An elevator will also be installed in the former church building to provide access for the handicapped.

8. No renovation will be done to the exterior of the premises.

9. The proposed facility will provide the students with the opportunity for training in both the theoretical and practical aspects of radio and television broadcasting, by providing the means to prepare scripts, and to produce, direct and perform scenerios conducted in studio and support spaces which are modern, equipped with state-of-the-art electronics, and accessible.

10. The University will relocate from Lisner Auditorium the twelve faculty members that are associated with the radio and television program and will put into the church building basically one studio and a number of control rooms.

11. There are currently about 120 students in the program. The projected number for the subject program is approximately 150 students. The increase in enrollment will not have any major impact on the 17,000 student enrollment of the University.

12. The faculty members presently park wherever their designated parking spaces are on campus. They will continue to park in those same areas. The students park in the existing University parking lots and will continue to park there.

13. The hours of operation are essentially from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., five days a week. There will occasionally be students in the proposed facility on the weekend, working on a class project.

14. In BZA Order No. 10403, dated December 22, 1970, the Board approved a campus plan for the University. The proposed facility and site is not in conflict with that plan.

15. The Office of Planning (OP), by report dated February 13, 1985, recommended approval of the application. The OP reported that the proposed facilities were intended to augment the existing facilities at the campus and would not result in any appreciable increase in the number of students. The facility would be located in the vicinity of other university functions near commercial development at Pennsylvania Avenue, so that it is not likely to have any adverse impacts or create objectionable conditions in the surrounding neighborhood. The Board concurs in the reasoning and recommendation of the Office of Planning.

16. The Department of Public Works, by memorandum dated February 11, 1985, reported that the proposed activity is an existing one under the approved George Washington University campus plan, and would not increase the University population. Parking for the University is provided in accordance with the approved campus plan. That plan established a requirement for parking of between 2,700 and 3,000 spaces. This project would have a negligible effect on the transportation services and facilities in the area. The Board concurs in the findings of the Department of Public Works.

17. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A filed no recommendation on the application.

18. There was no opposition to the application at the public hearing or of record.

19. At the public hearing, a property owner in the immediate area of the site testified that he was in favor of the application. In his opinion, the University was advancing a worthwhile project in increasing facilities for its students while not basically increasing the number of people of occupying the area.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires compliance with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 and that the relief requested can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and that it will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.

The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The applicant has addressed the issues of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions. The Board concludes that the use is located so as not to become objectionable to neighboring property. The Board further concludes that the application can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is GRANTED.

VOTE: 3-0 (William F. McIntosh and Carrie L. Thornhill to grant; Charles R. Norris to grant by proxy; Douglas J. Patton and John G. Parsons not voting, not having heard the case).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:


STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: _____

15 JUL 1985

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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